

# THE ADVOCATOR

A quarterly newsletter for Self-Advocates

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## *Self Advocacy*

**Independent**, not dependent: not depending or contingent upon something else for existence, operation, etc. Independence means making your own choices, working, having inclusion in the community which includes living in your own place, shopping, going out to eat, going to the movies, etc. Asking for help, advice, or opinions is a good way to gather information you can use when making your own choices. Experience also helps with being independent. For example, knowing how to use a computer, how to use public transportation, volunteering. What is your favorite thing to do? I like working and traveling.

Experience is a great builder of self confidence and knowledge. When I started working at my first job, it took a year or so, but I learned a lot and had quite a few other jobs which I gained experience and it prepared me for where I am now. Travel was the same for me. When my parents divorced my brother and I flew on airplanes back and forth to see our dad it prepared me so I could do it by myself. Since I've been living on my own, I've gotten lots of experience working a computer, a smartphone, and shopping online. Some of those experiences I've blended into my job. When I travel for work I make my own hotel reservations, reserve a shuttle, check in at the airport, and get to the gate. All of this and more helps you become very independent and that's very important.

The library is a great place to gain some knowledge. They have computers and one time classes to learn the basics of operating a computer. You can watch tv, movies, stream music, shop, and order your groceries. Things are always changing its important to keep up and stay in the know. I hope this article has been very informative to you today.

Warm Regards,

George

# Consumer Corner

## Consumer Corner

Many of us have been paying attention to the news as they've talk about the vaccine to fight COVID-19 and now they are talking about booster shots. So how do we know who needs a booster shot? Start by calling or visiting you doctor to express your questions and concerns. You may also find this article I've included to be helpful. **Michelle Diament** authored the article titled,

### ***People With IDD, DSPs May Qualify For COVID-19 Vaccine***

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's endorsement of a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for certain Americans means many people with developmental disabilities are now eligible for a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

After significant wrangling, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said last week that her agency would recommend that a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine should be given to people ages 65 and older, residents of long-term care settings like institutions and people ages 50 to 64 with underlying medical conditions.

In addition, the CDC said that people ages 18 to 49 with underlying medical conditions as well as those "at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting" may receive a booster "based on their individual benefits and risks."

The third dose is to be given at least six months after the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

The recommendation references a CDC list of [underlying medical conditions](#) that are associated with a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, one of which is [Down syndrome](#). In addition, the document notes that "people with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to have chronic health conditions, live in congregate setting, and face more barriers to healthcare. Studies have shown that some people with certain disabilities are more likely to get COVID-19 and have worse outcomes."

Multiple [studies have found](#) that people with developmental disabilities face a heightened risk of death and hospitalization from COVID-19.

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“Based on the evidence we have produced and I have read to date, I think all adults with IDD ... , no matter type of residential setting, should have access to a booster if they so choose due to the increased risk of more severe COVID-19 outcomes,” said Scott Landes, an associate professor of sociology at Syracuse University who has led a number of studies looking at the risk of COVID-19 among individuals in this population.

Even before the federal action, at least one state — Maryland — had [already authorized](#) booster shots for individuals age 65 and older living in group homes and other congregate settings.

Given the broad latitude that the CDC provided, people with developmental disabilities likely won’t have a problem qualifying, said Sean Luechtefeld with the American Network of Community Options and Resources, or ANCOR, which represents disability service providers across the nation.

“We believe all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities 18 or older will be permitted to receive a third dose of the Pfizer vaccine because the CDC guidelines empower people to assess their own risk,” he said.

The CDC also did not explicitly specify what types of workers are eligible, but given the occupational risk faced by direct support professionals assisting people with disabilities, Luechtefeld said his group expects that DSPs will be eligible for boosters.

The booster shot plan currently only applies to the Pfizer vaccine since federal health officials have not made any decisions yet about whether additional doses of the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccines are warranted.

***-Michelle Diamant***

I hope this has been educational for you, I try to give something interesting to all my readers. If there’s a comment or a suggestion that you’d like to make, my contact information is on the last page of the newsletter

Warm Regards,

George



## Josh Echols

I graduated from high school in 2005. It took a full year before I found my first job. An Employment Specialist helped me with the interview and training process. The job was at Publix as a customer service representative. The job was three days a week. I relied on Clastran to get me work, but due to their operational hours, my parents had to transport me back home.

This was a great first job experience, but I told my Employment Specialist that I really wanted to work full time and desired to work at the VA Medical Center. He helped me contact someone to assist in creating a job opportunity. While this was in the long process, one day the Director of the VA Medical Center in Birmingham, Al walked into Publix. I asked him if I can help him find anything in the store. Of course, I had no idea who he was at the time. A few days later my application landed on his desk. He recognized me from the attached photo, and based on his observation when I helped him, instructed the Customer Service Manager to hire me full time.

While I was between jobs, I needed to keep busy and be involved in helping people. I had been working with Full Life Ahead for several years. They had been a great resource for me. I reached out to them, and they introduced me to Susan Ellis, the Director of People First of Alabama. Mrs. Ellis wanted to organize a Jefferson County Chapter of People First, but she needed volunteers to make the chapter work. I volunteered to actively help start that chapter. I worked with the Jefferson Chapter for about four years, and during that time I served as the Chapter Vice-President. During that time, I was also honored to serve as the Vice President of People First of the State of Alabama. As part of my responsibilities as State Vice President, I served on the Board of the State of Alabama Transition Team, the Board of The Arc of Alabama, and on The Jefferson County Transition Team. In addition, I also attended several conferences focusing of persons with disabilities. The highlight of these conferences was a trip to Washington to attend a national conference which included a visit to both The House of Representatives and The Senate. It also included the opportunity to meet the CEO of The Arc of Central Alabama. He was kind enough to give me the opportunity to work in Human Resources at The Arc of Central Alabama. During that time on favorite job duty was sitting in on interviews of Direct Support Professionals.

In early 2020 my family made the decision to move to Madison, Al. My family is central to my support system, and in return I am central to their support system. As a result of this move, made two weeks before COVID-19 shutdown, I am once again in the middle of a job search. I have also become active in the Huntsville Chapter of People First.



## Upcoming Events:

Stay tuned for info on rescheduling of events that were not able to take place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please visit the link below for the latest informational webinar from the Office of Self-Advocacy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgetWaAlNyg>

**I would like to encourage all of you to send me your success stories. It can be anything from moving into your new home, starting a new job, making a trip to buy groceries, etc. Any accomplishment that goes towards being self-reliant and having inclusion in the community is acceptable. If you send me your stories, I can put them in the newsletter to share with others and help inspire them to achieve their goals.**

**Warm Regards,  
George**

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